

S/N: 10/064,936
Reply to Office Action of July 25, 2003

Atty Dkt No. 201-1582 RLC (FMC 1599 PUS)

Amendments to the Claims

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (currently amended) A vehicle bed assembly for a motor vehicle comprising:

a front panel;

a first side panel;

a second side panel;

a floor panel which is fixedly coupled to said first and to said second side panels and which is further fixedly coupled to said front panel;

a first rail disposed horizontally which receives and which is linearly coextensive to said first side panel, said first rail coupling said first side panel to said front panel; and

a second rail disposed horizontally which is substantially identical to said first rail and which receives and which is linearly coextensive to said second side panel, said second rail coupling said second side panel to said front panel.

2. (original) The vehicle bed assembly of Claim 1 further comprising an end cap member which is disposed within said first rail and which selectively couples said first side panel to said front panel.

3. (previously presented) The vehicle bed assembly of Claim 2 wherein each of said first and second rails respectively includes a generally flat top portion and two generally opposed side surfaces and wherein said end cap member is coupled to said generally flat top portion and to only one of said two generally opposed side surfaces of said first rail.

4. (original) The vehicle bed assembly of Claim 3 wherein said end cap member includes a protruding threaded member.

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5. (original) The vehicle bed assembly of Claim 2 further comprising a first reception member which is coupled to said first side panel and a second reception member which is coupled to said second side panel and which is substantially identical to said first reception member.

6. (original) The vehicle bed assembly of Claim 5 wherein said first reception member comprises a first portion which forms a member reception pocket having an axis of symmetry which is parallel to a plane containing said first side panel; and a second stem portion which forms an acute angle with said axis of symmetry.

7. (original) The vehicle bed assembly of Claim 6 wherein each of said first and said second side panels are corrugated.

8. (previously presented) A vehicle bed assembly comprising:
a first bracket having a first wall and a second wall which cooperatively form a mounting portion, said first bracket further having a third wall which orthogonally projects from said first wall in a direction opposite to said second wall and which is selectively coupled to a vehicular frame member;

a floor bed panel which is disposed upon and is coupled to said second wall of said first bracket;

a front panel member which receives a portion of said floor bed panel and which is coupled to said first wall of said first bracket;

a second bracket which receives said front panel member;

a first side panel which is coupled to said floor bed panel;

a second side panel which is coupled to said floor bed panel;

a first rail which receives said first side panel;

a second rail which receives said second side panel;

a first end cap member which is disposed within said first rail and which selectively couples said first rail to said second bracket; and

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a second end cap which is substantially identical to said first end cap, which is disposed within said second rail, and which selectively couples said second rail to said second bracket.

9. (original) The vehicle bed assembly of Claim 8 wherein said first side panel includes a cutout portion and wherein said vehicle bed assembly further comprises a first and a second member, wherein said second member is attached to a first surface of said first side panel and overlays said cutout portion and wherein said first member is selectively attached to said second member and cooperates with said second member to form a stake reception pocket.

10. (original) The vehicle bed assembly of Claim 9 further comprising a first reception member which is coupled to said first side panel and a second reception member which is coupled to said second side panel and which is substantially identical to and aligned with said first reception member.

11. (original) The vehicle bed assembly of Claim 10 wherein said first reception member comprises a first portion which forms a member reception pocket having an axis of symmetry which is parallel to a plane containing said first side panel and a second stem portion which forms an acute angle with respect to said axis of symmetry.

12. (original) The vehicle bed assembly of Claim 11 wherein each of said first and said second side panels is corrugated.

13. (cancelled)

14. (previously presented) A method for constructing a vehicle bed assembly, said method comprising the steps of:

providing a floor pan;
providing a front panel;

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providing a first side panel;
providing a second side panel;
providing a tail gate;
coupling said front panel to said floor pan;
coupling said first side panel to said floor pan;
coupling said second side panel to said floor pan;
coupling said tail gate to said floor pan;
providing a direct load path from any location on said first side panel to a frame portion of a vehicle; and

providing a direct load path from any location on said second side panel to said frame portion of said vehicle, thereby forming said vehicle bed assembly;

wherein said step of providing a direct load path from any location on said first side panel to a frame portion of said vehicle comprises the steps of providing a first rail; coupling said first rail to said first side panel; providing a bracket; coupling said bracket to said front panel; coupling said first rail to said bracket; and coupling said bracket to said frame portion of said vehicle.

15. (previously presented) The method of Claim 14 wherein said step of providing a direct load path from any location on said second side panel to said frame portion of said vehicle comprises the steps of:

providing a second rail which is substantially identical to said first rail;
coupling said second rail to said second side panel; and
coupling said second rail to said bracket.

16. (original) The method of Claim 15 further comprising the steps of:
forming a first and a second reception member;
coupling said first reception member to said first side panel; and
coupling said second reception member to said second side panel, thereby allowing said second reception member to cooperate with said first reception member to form a member reception assembly.

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17. (original) The method of Claim 16 wherein said first reception member comprises a first portion which forms a member reception pocket having an axis of symmetry which is parallel to a plane containing said first side panel and a second stem portion which forms an acute angle with respect to said axis of symmetry.

18. (previously presented) The method of Claim 17 further comprising the steps of:

providing a Z—shaped bracket;
coupling said Z—shaped bracket to said frame portion of said vehicle; and
coupling said Z—shaped bracket to said front panel.

19. (original) The method of Claim 18 further comprising the steps of:
forming at least a first stake pocket in said first rail; and
forming at least a second stake pocket in said second rail.

20. (cancelled)